

Testimony of Ariel Smith

I am here on behalf of all of the children of this great state who have lost a primary relationship with one of their parents because the courts decided it was in our best interest.

I am here because someone decided that I was much too important to have a loving ongoing equal relationship with my father.

I am here because someone decided for me that he was not important enough for me to see and have fun with and get to know him on an equal basis with my mother.

I am here because someone assumed that he might be abusive or a detriment to my well being without even knowing his name.

I am here because the state has stolen from me one of the greatest relationships of my life and that is with both parents.

I AM HERE BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN CHEATED.

Because the courts made this decision. I have learned how to be deceptive by hiding from my father when he came to pick me up through the instruction of my mother.

Because the courts made this decision, I have learned resentment and dislike because I was taught that he did not love me.

Because the courts made this decision, I could look into the stands at my basketball games and know that my father would not see me playing and could find out how good I was by reading the sport section in the newspaper.

Because the courts decided what was best for me, I am here to say that if in fact the courts were truly on my side, it would have understood how important this man was and how I should have learned how to be a man from him.

The gangs were right out side my front door and posed a viable option because my father's ongoing direction was not present because the courts put me in that position by not recognizing my father as important in my life.

Thanks to the courts, my brother who is fighting liver cancer may never know my father the way I am learning who he is at this very moment.

I am begging this committee to support HB5267 and not allow another child to suffer the loss that I have suffered.

IF YOU TRULY WANT TO DO WHAT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD. PLEASE ALLOW EVERY CHILD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE GUIDED BY BOTH OF THEIR PARENTS. THIS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.